

Conservation plan means a record of the participant's decisions, and supporting information, for treatment of a unit of land or water, and includes the schedule of operations, activities, and estimated expenditures needed to solve identified natural resource concerns.

Conservation practice means a specified treatment, such as a structural or vegetative practice or a land management practice, which is planned and applied according to NRCS standards and specifications.

Contract means a legal document that specifies the rights and obligations of any person who has been accepted for participation in the AMA Program.

Cost-share payment means the financial assistance from NRCS to the participant to share the cost of installing eligible practices.

Designated conservationist means an NRCS employee whom the State conservationist has designated as responsible for administration of the AMA Program.

Indian tribe means any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community which is recognized as eligible for the special assistance and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians.

Indian trust lands means real property in which the United States holds title as trustee for an Indian or tribal beneficiary, or a Indian or tribal beneficiary holds title and the United States maintains a trust relationship.

Life-span means the minimum time period in which the conservation practices are to be maintained and used for their intended purpose.

Liquidated damages means a sum of money stipulated in the contract that the participant agrees to pay if the participant breaches the contract. The sum represents an estimate of the anticipated or actual harm caused by the breach, and reflects the difficulties of proof of loss and the inconvenience or non-feasibility of otherwise obtaining an adequate remedy.

Operation and maintenance means work that is to be performed by the participant to keep the applied conservation practice functioning for the intended purpose during its life span. Operation includes the administration,

management, and performance of non-maintenance actions needed to keep the completed practice safe and functioning as intended. Maintenance includes work to prevent deterioration of the practice, repairing damage, or replacement of the practice to its original condition if one or more components fail.

Participant means a producer who is a party to an AMA contract.

Producer means a person who is engaged in agricultural production.

Secretary means the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

State Conservationist means the NRCS employee authorized to direct and supervise NRCS activities in a State, the Caribbean Area, or the Pacific Basin Area.

State Technical Committee means a committee established by the Secretary in a State pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 3861.

Technical assistance means the personnel and support resources needed to conduct conservation practice survey, layout, design, installation, and certification; training and providing quality assurance for professional conservationists; and evaluation and assessment of the AMA Program.

Unit of concern means a parcel of agricultural land that has natural resource conditions that are of concern to the participant.

§ 1465.4 Program requirements.

(a) Participation in the AMA Program is voluntary. The participant, in cooperation with the local conservation district, applies for practice installation for the farm or ranching unit of concern. The NRCS provides cost-share payments through contracts to apply needed conservation practices within a time schedule specified in the contract.

(b) The Chief determines the funds available for financial assistance according to the purpose and projected cost for which the financial assistance is provided in a fiscal year. The Chief allocates the funds available to carry out the AMA Program.

(c) To be eligible to participate in the AMA Program, an applicant must:

(1) Be an agricultural producer;

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(2) Have control of the land for the life of the proposed contract period, except that:

(i) An exception may be made by the Chief in the case of land allotted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), tribal land, or other instances in which the Chief determines that there is sufficient assurance of control; or

(ii) If the applicant is a tenant of the land involved in agricultural production the applicant shall provide NRCS with the written concurrence of the landowner in order to apply an eligible practice(s);

(3) Submit an application form CCC-1200;

(4) Supply information as required by NRCS to determine eligibility for the AMA Program; and

(5) States, political subdivisions, and entities thereof will not be persons eligible for payment. Any cooperative association of producers that markets commodities for producers shall not be considered to be a person eligible for payment.

(d) Land may only be considered for enrollment in the AMA program if NRCS determines that the land is:

(1) Privately owned land;

(2) Publicly owned land where:

(i) The land is under private control for the contract period and is included in the participant's operating unit;

(ii) Conservation practices will contribute to an improvement in the identified natural resource concern; and

(iii) The participant has provided NRCS with written authorization from the government landowner to apply the conservation practices; or

(3) The land is federally recognized Tribal, BIA allotted, or Indian trust land.

§ 1465.5 Conservation practices.

(a) The State Conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Committee, will determine the conservation practices eligible for AMA Program payments. To be considered eligible conservation practices, the practices must meet the purposes of the AMA as set out in § 1465.1.

(b) The conservation plan includes the schedule of operations, activities, and estimated expenditures of the prac-

tices needed to solve identified natural resource concerns.

Subpart B—Contracts

§ 1465.20 Applications for participation and selecting applications for contracting.

(a) Any producer who has eligible land may submit an application for participation in the AMA Program at a USDA service center. Producers who are members of a joint operation shall file a single application for the joint operation.

(b) NRCS will accept applications throughout the year. The State Conservationist will distribute information on the availability of assistance and the state-specific goals. Information will be provided that explains the process to request assistance.

(c) The State Conservationist, with advice from the State Technical Committee, will develop ranking criteria and a ranking process to select applications, taking into account local and state priorities.

(d) The State Conservationist or designated conservationist with advice from the State Technical Committee and using a locally led process will rank and select applications for contracting based on the state-developed ranking criteria and ranking process.

(e) The State Conservationist or designated conservationist will work with the applicant to collect the information necessary to evaluate the application using the ranking criteria.

§ 1465.21 Contract requirements.

(a) In order for a participant to receive cost-share payments, the participant shall enter into a contract agreeing to implement eligible conservation practices.

(b) An AMA contract will:

(1) Incorporate by reference all portions of a unit applicable to the AMA Program;

(2) Be for a duration of 3 to 10 years;

(3) Incorporate all provisions as required by law or statute, including participant requirements to:

(i) Not conduct any practices on the farm or ranch unit of concern that would tend to defeat the purposes of the contract according to § 1465.25;